

SPRING 1969 ASSEMBLY



MAJOR NICK ROWE: OF

Major James N. Rowe, Class of 1960, tells the
Corps the story of his five years as a Viet Cong prisoner.

Attempted Escapes and Final Breakout

I BOTCHED UP FOUR attempts to escape. I had eight to fifteen guards. It's not so much the number of guards that are with you because I could walk out of camp anytime I wanted. There was no problem on that. But once you got out of camp, it was where you went.

Now we were six kilometers from the Song Trem River. If you went overland, you'd never make it. If you went in the canals, you had a good chance of making it. There were generally east-west, north-south canals, and the east-west canals would go out and join the Song Trem, which was a big river. Then it was just 21 kilometers swim down the Song Trem, and you were free. They had camps—they have a central camp and then satellite camps all the way around it, so anywhere you go, you're going to run into a camp.

I said I botched up four attempts. I really fouled one up, and I had to do some real quick talking. They let me use a boat to go catch fish, and the second day that I had

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it, I sort of got misoriented. I was on my way to the river, and I met my guards coming back from the market, and they wanted to know what I was doing four "clicks" from the camp with their boat and all my supplies in the boat. I told them I was lost, and fortunately they were very gullible themselves and the cadre were not in the camp at the time. I got out of that one.

This final one was fairly interesting. On the 22d of December when the B52s hit us, we were in a new complex which had just been built, and we were forced to move out of it. We were in a very fluid situation. There were three howitzers firing harassing and interdiction fires; choppers were putting in strikes and ARVN troops on the ground. The VC were upset.

We were moving from small bivouac to small bivouac, trying to avoid all the activity. On the morning of 31 December we were camped right beside a small canal and had two Cobras, about four LOHs and a command ship

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Shown on the stand with dignitaries of McAllen, Texas, telling his experiences as a prisoner of the Viet Cong.



Before and after. Somebody put some beads on me and said, "You're a leader, Man, you're leader in the movement."





At home in McAllen, Texas, with his parents
Mr. and Mrs. Lee Rowe.

And the idiot followed me. Porky had a burp gun, a PPS 41, the same kind they used in Korca. It has the banana magazine, and he had two Chinese grenades. Porky's a "rag arm." He could throw about five meters. I knew he wasn't going to throw the grenades because he'd kill himself too.

So my only problem was his burp gun. He had it slung across his back, and it was one on one, so there was really "no sweat." What I was going to do was to keep Porky running in circles so I could bring a chopper in to pick both of us up. Well Porky got tangled up in some brush, and it was a beautiful opportunity, so I reached up and triggered the release on his magazine. I dropped the magazine out of the weapon. This left him completely neutralized, and about 200 meters later he found out he didn't have a magazine in his weapon, and he went wild right on the spot.

He didn't know what to do; he didn't know where to go. He was looking at the choppers. He was looking at me. He was looking at the empty weapon, and he didn't really know what to do.

I said to him, "Drive on Porky, we're in good shape." So we kept going, and I kept waving at the choppers, and they kept going over us. Now these LOHs are nasty little things. They're kind of like a Sunbeam Alpine, and they fly right at the top of the reeds and with the prop blast they drive reeds open, and they have a minigun mounted right in the front. The pilot that's flying about 15 meters behind guns anything that the first one opens up. I was wearing black, that was very unhealthy in that area at that time.

After a while it looked as if the LOHs and the command ship were going to move off. It looked as if they were withdrawing. So it came to a question of whether Porky and I were going to go, or if I was going to go. Porky lost. Porky stayed.

I took his weapon and his radio, and I left him where he was. Porky didn't want to move at that time. I moved about 200 meters and then cleared an area out and was waving a mosquito net. I found out later one of the pilots who was flying the LOH was wounded, and he was in the Brooke Army Medical Center. I talked to him, and he said that somebody spotted me waving the mosquito net and said, "Look there's a VC trying to surrender." And some bloodthirsty fellow out there said, "gun him."

Well, Major Thompson was flying the command ship, and he's a very good friend of mine now, said, "No I'm going to go down there and pick him up." He told them to cover him that he was going down to pick up the VC. Well they got down low, and I had a beard about down to here. I hadn't bathed for about two weeks, and I guess if they couldn't see me, they could smell me.

He came down. He checked me out and said "Wait one, it's an American." He came in, and he shot a 180 degree turn, and he came in and picked me up. It was probably the most beautiful sight I've ever seen in my life. They took me out, and 20 minutes later I was in Cau Mau. One thing I think of most, when I got on the chopper the pilot said, "What's your name?" and I said "Rowe." He said, "Are you Nick Rowe?" I said "Yes." Then he said, "You've

come in. They were putting in a strike about 300 meters from us. They hit another camp that was right near us, a temporary camp, they "greased" eight guards; they wounded three.

The VC brought the remains to our camp. A minigun had been used on the guards, and if you wrapped them in cellophane you could have marketed them. They were really that bad.

There was really nothing left, and my guards were upset. This didn't do anything for their morale. They then heard that ARVN was putting troops on the ground, and this caused them to move out. They decided well let's go hide in the reeds, and so we moved across the canal and went into a whole field of reeds. Now this area was surrounded on all sides by canals, but they're one kilometer square, and we were going to go in there and evade the ARVN troops.

I had five guards and one cadre with me. The cadre I disliked in particular. His name was Mr. Sau. He was very arrogant. I called him Julius Salzer particularly because of his attitude. When these guys moved into the field, they were making a trail that looked like Fifth Avenue, and I knew the choppers would get on it.

We had this one guard named Porky; he was one of the particular cowards in the group, and he seemed to be a little more excited and panicky than the others, so I told him, "Well look Porky you're a good kid, and I don't want you to get killed. I'm not thinking of myself, but I want to save you." And I told him, "Well look we're going to break off from the main group, and we'll make a real small trail. The choppers won't see us, but they're going to 'grease' that whole other bunch."

got a classmate on the horn." And one of my classmates was the S3 down on the canal running the operation. And I no sooner got on the chopper than I was talking to a classmate.

From the time that I talked to him to the time I got out of Vietnam I saw more classmates than I knew existed. But I got into Saigon, and I had this horrible beard and I hadn't bathed for two weeks. Somebody put some beads on me and said, "You're a leader, man, you're a leader in the movement." I subsequently shaved and got ready to come home, but that was the gist of how I got out.

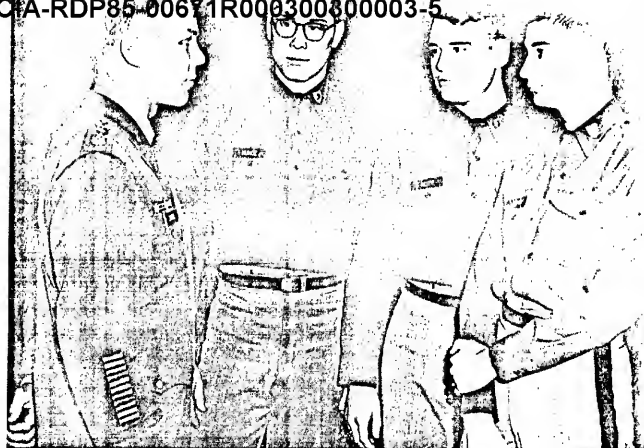
On Three Execution Lists

THE EASIEST THING in the world is to die. You can die if you want to; you can die if you don't want to. And it just takes a little bit of effort to keep going. They'll try to keep you alive, but their means are limited, and they don't really have the ability or the desire to keep you going over a long period of time. It's up to you.

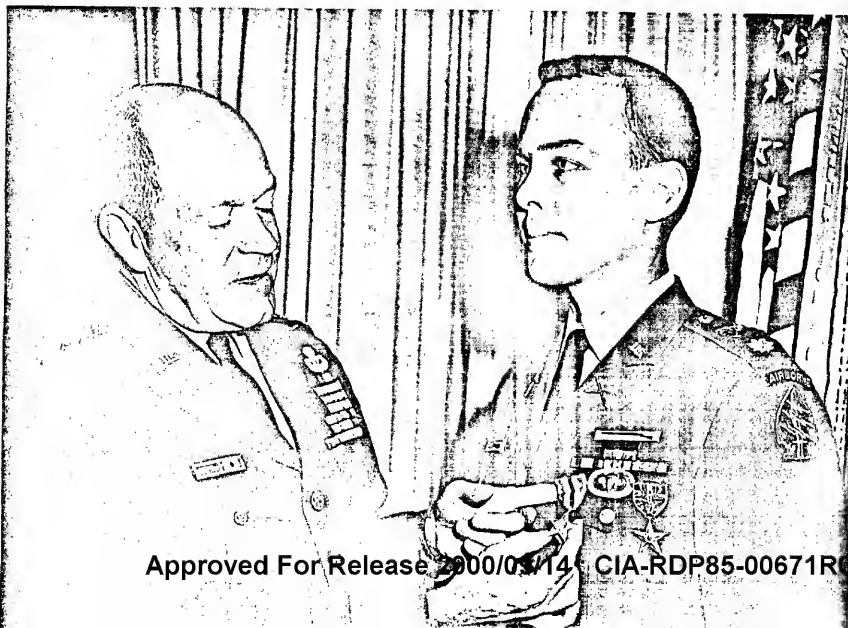
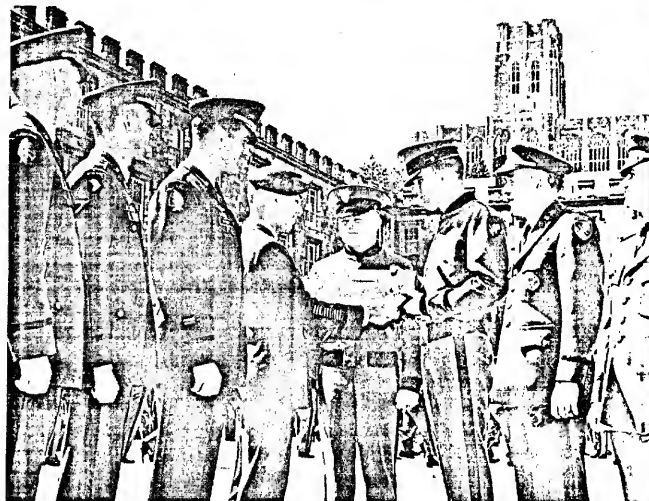
There was one thing that was really disturbing to me, I was on three execution lists. I was removed from the first one for reasons unknown. And in early 1967 I was on another list to be in retaliation for two VC who were going to be executed in Saigon. A Major, myself, and a couple of NCO's were going to be executed; however, the people in Saigon did not execute the VC, so we got to live, and I was going through their files just before I got out. I found a piece of paper that came from MR3 headquarters, and it said that Lieutenant Rowe because of his attitude was not going to pass the course, and I was to terminate on or about 30 January. This inspired me to leave. I was not too impressed by the program of events.

I think I might comment here, the interrogator that came out, we called him Goldie, he had a mouth of gold teeth. He was somewhat incom- (Continued on page 42)

Receiving the Silver Star and the Bronze Star Medal from Lieutenant General Harry H. Critz, Commanding General, Fourth U. S. Army.



Major Rowe with Cadet Munoz, from his home town, and Cadets Keith and Lentini. Below: Rowe presents plaque from 5th Special Forces Group to USCC.



collegiate. Winter is the least active season, but there is still basketball, indoor track, boxing, wrestling, swimming, gymnastics, hockey, fencing and squash. Spring opens with a full schedule of baseball, tennis, golf, track and soccer. And of course, fall brings the Army's best known sport—football. For the cadet who does not wish to compete in these sports there are others such as judo, rugby, Karate, sailing, water polo, scuba diving and a Cadet Sport Parachute Club that provides parachute jumping experience. Pistol, rifle and skeet shooting clubs find many followers. Last, but by all means not least, is skiing. This I am sure would appeal to many local young men in our area. It was my privilege to meet Mr. Frank Calamari, the ski coach at the Academy and our discussion on skiing and cadet life took up the better part of an evening after the day's busy schedule was finished.

The cadets publish their own yearbook, THE HOWITZER; their own monthly magazine, THE POINTER; a small handbook called BUGLE NOTES; and SLUM AND GRAVY, a sports bulletin, all as part of their activities. There is a Cadet Glee Club, orchestra, and a Cadet Combo for those who are musically inclined. There are numerous other activities that keep life for the cadet at West Point from becoming boring.

Later in the afternoon we were introduced to many cadets from Vermont and New Hampshire. I met a young man from Burlington, Cadet Rice, whom I enjoyed talking to very much. He was on the ski team so that gave us something in common to discuss. The men that I met were very enthusiastic about their life at West Point. The various questions that were asked of them were answered truthfully and without embellishment. Our group enjoyed this get-together with the cadets and I am sure that the feeling was mutual.

Dinner that evening was at the Hotel Thayer with many faculty members, officers and their charming wives present. Needless to say, the discussions encompassed about every conceivable subject; from military history to space exploration and from English to Russian, with a few odds and ends thrown in. All in all, it was a very enjoyable evening.

Tuesday morning after breakfast at the hotel, our group was taken on a tour of the rooms, or barracks. There are two men to a room with study facilities for both. I was struck with the cleanliness and orderly manner in which their living quarters are kept. Nothing fancy, but comfortable and well laid out for studying and rest. Study hours are from 7:30 to 11:00 p.m. in the room but permission to go to the library or some extra-curricular activity during this time may be granted.

After the visit to the cadet rooms we returned to the Administration Building where we were addressed by Brig. Gen. Bernard W. Rogers, Commandant of Cadets. His talk covered the Department of

Tactics. He explained to us the organization of the Military Academy, function of the different departments, the Cadet Honor Code and other aspects regarding the administrative part of West Point. A graduate of the Academy, Rhodes scholar, career officer and a man of fine character, it was quite obvious that Gen. Rogers greatly impressed his audience.

Just before lunch we attended an Admissions briefing by Col. Manley Rogers. This was more for the benefit of the teachers and guidance counsellors present but I, nevertheless, did get a considerable amount of worthwhile information from it. First of all, the Col. informed us that any boy in high school who might be interested in attending West Point and following a military career should consider making his plans while in the latter part of his junior year. He should be able to meet the Physical Aptitude Examination requirements. He should stand in the upper portion of his class, and have scored well on standardized tests. He should contact Admissions at West Point. He should check with his Congressman or Senator to see about Congressional nominations. This should be done in the spring of his junior year. My advice besides these procedures would be for the young man to talk with his guidance counsellor or teacher, who can help him immeasurably in gaining admission to the Academy. It really isn't as difficult to get into West Point as many people might believe. I was quite surprised to learn this.

The last place we visited before our flight home was the gymnasium. The gym has five floors with numerous basketball courts, indoor track, swimming pools, an obstacle course, boxing and wrestling rings and a variety of athletic equipment where the cadet may develop a strong body and prepare him for his future role as a soldier.

The time had then arrived for us to depart. We returned to the hotel, picked up our luggage, and then the bus took us back to Stewart AFB. There we said goodbye to Capt. Stanley, thanked him for a most enjoyable time, and boarded the plane for home, arriving in Burlington late in the afternoon.

I can say in all sincerity that I enjoyed every part of my trip to West Point and in closing, I want to thank all those persons involved for the gracious treatment I received while their guest.

I was greatly impressed with the buildings at West Point. They are of superb military Gothic architecture and each conforms with the other in design and structure to form a symmetrical pattern that is extremely beautiful. They give the impression of strength and solidness that is befitting the institution they represent.

In the classroom I was quite taken by the excellent facilities, small classes, the evidence of audio-visual aids, the seriousness of purpose of the cadets and the dedicated officers and instructors.

In my opinion the Admissions policy favors the admission of students at least

of young men from small schools in Vermont as opposed to the larger schools in urban areas. According to the number of Congressional appointments in Vermont and New Hampshire this would appear to be so.

I was surprised to learn that only about 80 hours of military textbook instruction is given during the academic year. However, the months of July and August are spent at Camp Buckner near West Point where the cadets undergo rigorous field training exercises with units of the regular Army.

I was always under the impression that West Point stressed the military. This is not necessarily so. The fact that the cadets live under military discipline, calculated pressure and a Code of Honor, they nevertheless receive an excellent liberal education that is comparable to the finest universities in the country.

Reprinted from *The News & Citizens*
March 27, 1969 No. 3656

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Nick Rowe of Army

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pulent, I felt. And he was one of the first ones I came in contact with. I did play games with him. I lie a lot. This is something I didn't learn here (West Point), but with them I thought it was valid. In the Code of Conduct it says I will evade answering questions to the best of my ability, and the only thing I could come up with was to lie to them, and Goldie was very gullible. As a result I think when he found out about some of the things I told him—maybe he checked a little bit later—he found out that his right leg was about three feet longer than his left leg. It had been pulled quite often.

The Story of Nick Rowe

THIS IS SORT of a unique experience for me. The last time I was here I was on the Dean's other list and spent most of my time on the area. I'm glad I'm in an audience of friends today. Actually coming back here to speak is a privilege for me; however, for those of you who have aspired the same type of privilege, I would not encourage you to do the same thing I did in order to be able to come back.

What I would like to do today is make you aware of some of the lessons which I learned in my somewhat overextended stay with the Viet Cong—primarily, because in a few short months you are going to be dealing with this problem.

A little background—I was with B Company, 5th Special Forces Group in 1963. I've been with Special Forces since 1961. After graduation I went through Airborne and Ranger. I went through the Artillery Basic Course, and there were several renegades in the class. We went Special Forces from Artillery. I subsequently went to the Army Language School, and the Special Warfare Course.

I completed all of the training cycles which they had, and in July of 1963 I was sent to South Vietnam to a small camp which was in the Mekong Delta. The name of the camp was Tan Thieu. It was about 26 kilometers from nowhere. We were in an area that was pro VC.

The reason we were there is that they were building a road between Ca Mau and Can Tho, and our camp lay on the road, and they were going to have us pacify and secure this area so that they could build a road through there. The first team that went through—the pioneer team—took five months to get into the area. It took them one month to build a portion of the camp; and then, they left country, and we took over.

Now we moved into the area as an A Detachment of 12 men, and when we got there, we had 120 strike force personnel. These are Vietnamese indigenous to the area, and we were training them to fight guerrilla warfare in that particular area. When I was captured in October 1963, we had 520 strikers. We had almost a battalion-size force, and this was the reason the VC attacked us. We were getting to the point that we were strong enough to hurt them, and they decided "to do us in."

The events which surrounded the capture: on 29 October 1963, we went on a patrol with three strike force companies. We had one company which was an assault force. I was with this company. We had two others which were an ambush force, and we had one other American advisor with them. There were three American advisors with the assault company. We were going into a village reported to have had a VC unit of small size. They said it was an undetermined size but nothing really bad. "Just go in there and bump them—either make them run or kill them." And we assaulted the village with the plan being for us to hit it with the assault company. The VC were going to "bug out," we knew this, and we thought they were going to run into our ambush. But they ran the other way. They left our two companies sitting out there on an ambush post with nobody coming through.

My counterpart, who was a Vietnamese second lieutenant, decided to pursue. Now, this was something that turned out to be rather fatal. We pursued a group that was about platoon-size with our company, and we ran into a main force battalion with 11 companies and over 1000 men. We had 154 in our company, and of the 154 I think six got back to camp. Three Americans were captured, and the rest were left in the area. In this patrol, Captain Humbert Versace, Sergeant Damon Pritchard, and I were captured. This began my rather overextended stay with the VC.

In the period of time that I spent with them I learned to look at them more as individuals rather than as a sort of a faceless mass. Every time in Tan Thieu you only saw them at night, and if they came close enough so that you could get a look at them, it was too close. While I

was with them, I took a rather good look at them. I began to study them—to learn exactly what made them tick: how they thought, why they thought what they thought, and what was motivating them and driving them. Based on their performance in Vietnam, I think it goes without saying, they are probably the most dedicated, the most loyal, the most fanatical enemy that we have ever faced.

I'll deal first with the cadre—their officers who are responsible for the political indoctrination, the military indoctrination, and the training of all guards and all soldiers. The ones that I encountered were between 40 and 50 years old. Most of them had been rear rank privates with "Uncle Ho" back when he fought the Japanese and during the first revolution which began in 1945 and ended in 1954. They'd worked their way up through the chain of command, as such, and had become cadre.

All the cadre were Communists. They were devoted, they were loyal, they were well educated, well versed in the subjects they were to teach, and they were inspired. They believed so strongly in what they were doing that they communicated well with the people whom they were trying to instruct—these are the guards, the soldiers, and the people at lower levels.

The guards themselves divide into two time-frames—prior to the 1968 Tet offensive and after the 1968 Tet offensive. Prior to the 1968 offensive the guards were between 24-36 years old. Most of them had military experience. They were well trained—this is relative to the normal troops over there. In our camp, I had a guard squad—a squad plus—between 15-20 men, most of the time. After the 1968 Tet offensive, I had about eight guards. Their ages dropped—I'd say in the teens. We received a lot of 12, 14, 16-year-old fillers. Now the older guards had disappeared. I heard they were on R and R; I heard they were TDY in Cambodia. Nobody ever said they "bought the farm," but this was obviously what happened. They never came back.

This is the way it worked with the guards that were in our camp. They would go to one of the hard core VC battalions during combat; then they would return, those of them who were going to return. They would come back to the camp as a rest area and double as guards.

Now, we always had at least five or six guards in the camp. The guards themselves underwent a very strenuous political indoctrination. Their political and their military training were inseparable. Their military is a means of achieving a political goal. They were taught the Marxist doctrine based on the Lenin revision thereof; basically this is that historical evolution is not going to happen just because it is historically destined to happen—you have got to cause it. This is brought home to them in all their classes, which they attend every day—every morning and every evening. They are well aware of the world situation, but only from their viewpoint.

The guards are indoctrinated in this manner. They have a discussion on every problem that exists in the world; for example: General De Gaulle's news on the Vietnam problem—support or non-support of the National Liberation Front. For instance, 12 guards and one cadre will sit down in a little circle—they have tea and cookies. The guards will discuss this problem. The way they do it is the cadre or the emergent leader within the group will give background material on a problem. This background material will be exactly what the National Liberation Front wants them to know about the problem. They have no basis for comparison, no facts from which they can draw their own conclusion. They take what is given them.

The cadre then gives them a brief outline, a synopsis of the party line so to speak—the views of the National Liberation Front or the Viet Cong on this particular subject, and then each of the guards is allowed freedom of speech. They discuss it. Every man is required to make a statement—to state his opinion concerning this problem. Now, put yourself in their place. You don't have anything to draw from your own experience, you have heard a background from a cadre, you heard the party line, and then somebody asks you, "Now, what do you think about it?"

What the guards come out with is basically the party line with one or two original thoughts inserted into this party line framework. The cadre, talking in turn, takes mental note of everything they have said, and when they have all spoken, sums up the viewpoint of the group, which, in effect, is the viewpoint of the National Liberation Front. Now, the cadre takes all of their views and fits them into the framework. Put yourself in the place of one of the guards. He sits there; he listens to it. He hears his opinion which is based on the Front's opinion, and then he hears this whole thing summed up again, and in his mind he is relating what he said to the party line. So when they finish everyone is pretty much in accord with what the Front thinks. The guards are then required to go back to their "hooch" and write what they have learned from their discussion. The final products are a group of guards who are totally in accord with the party line.

I have listened to this on numerous occasions—the same pattern every time, the effect was the same every time. If there was a dissenter, the cadre took him aside by himself and gave him private lessons on what to think.

I believe it would be a mistake to omit the people in any discussion of the Viet Cong or the number of people who sympathize with the Viet Cong. I think you can say that the majority of the Vietnamese people wish to be neutral. They want to be left alone, they want to till their rice land, they want to live, and they would like to have a democratic type freedom—no threat of death. They do not know about Democracy; they do not know about Communism. A parliament, a government, a congress, a constitution mean

very little to them because they have had no contact with them. They only want to live in their particular area, have village economy, their own particular village chief, village council. They see no further than this, because most of them have not been out of their village. If they have been out of their village, they have only been to their district. They know nothing of world politics, they know nothing of the conflict between Communism and our form of government within the world. The problem that exists is that neither side will allow them to be neutral. If one supports the government, the Communists kill him. If he supports the Communists, then the government gets him. So, the people are caught in the middle.

They have had warfare on their land for 24 years. They are very long-suffering. They would like to be left alone, and the people would like to have peace, but they are unable to have it.

Some facts which are related to this—Number One, the people are very concerned about who can protect them against whom. If the government can protect them against the VC, then the people will follow the government—not for political reasons but for safety's sake. Conversely, if they are in an area which is controlled by the VC, they'll follow the VC because if they don't, they're dead. This is the problem that exists.

Right now a ray of hope which is appearing is that the war effort which the VC forced the people to support is becoming so burdensome that the people find they no longer support the VC. The VC not being the government in power can promise the sun, the moon, and the stars, and they don't have to come through with anything at the moment. At the same time they can point their fingers at the government in Saigon and say they're not giving you democratic freedom, they're not allowing you to do this, they're not allowing you to do that, they're taxing you. They can really "cut down" on the government in Saigon, and yet at the same time they have no requirement to produce themselves.

The one thing they do promise the people, and you realize that most of the people in Vietnam are peasants—peasant farmers—they promise them land. This is of utmost importance to the Vietnamese people—land on which they can grow their crops, they can grow their rice, which to them is their livelihood. This is their whole life. But a fact here is that the VC now require the people to contribute to the revolution two-thirds to three-fourths of what they produce. So the people are discovering they are giving away more than they ever had before. They actually have less now than they had before, and if the government in Saigon with our help can guarantee safety to these people, I think you will find that more and more of them cross over and join the government cause. Again, not for political reasons initially but just by virtue of the fact that they can live in safety—this is of utmost importance to them.

One thing that I thought was of interest was the war from the VC standpoint. As a POW you don't hear any western news sources. All you hear is Radio Liberation, Hanoi, Hanna, Radio Peking, you get the Liberation newspaper, you get the Liberation news bulletin, all sorts of good stuff—no comics on Sundays—nothing like that—very dry reading, but they only give you their side of the story.

I'll give you a couple of examples of this. In North Vietnam the United States "lost 3,247 aircraft to include six B-52s and three F-111As. We lost 187,000 U.S. troops killed after the first Tet offensive; we lost more tanks than we had in Vietnam. No matter how many people we had killed, wounded, or missing in action, we always had 525,000 Americans in Vietnam—which meant that 'repple-depple' were really pushing people in."

Now they never considered this, they sort of ignored it, but there were little inaccuracies which always occurred that gave us an indication that what was coming through was not exactly correct, but they wouldn't let us get any western news broadcasts whatsoever.

From the United States we heard about the dissension, the anti-war movement, the riots on campus, the racial violence. We heard numerous comments by Senators and Congressmen condemning our effort in Vietnam. We heard about the draft card burners, we heard about the dissenters or the draft dodgers. All of this was designed to actually destroy our faith in our own country.

This was probably the most devastating portion of their indoctrination. Primarily because when we received information from their sources, this was from Hanoi, from inside South Vietnam, Radio Liberation and all that, you can cut it by 90 per cent, and you still received a pack of lies. When they start quoting UPI, AP, Time, Newsweek, Washington Post, and members of our government saying we're wrong, let's get out, this was something that really got to us, primarily because we knew why we were there. We knew whom we were fighting, we had no gripe coming because we had volunteered, and yet we could see where there were those in the United States who were saying we made a mistake. And we worry that possibly there are enough of these people so that the government will react and say well we did make a mistake, and if we pulled out then all the people we've lost, all the effort in Vietnam goes for nothing.

And I think right now the question is not, "why we're there or how we got there because we're there." I think the major issue now is, "How can we win?" I think we owe something to the Vietnamese people, and I think it is this—the right for them to be free. The right for them to live in a democracy. They don't understand it now. In fact they don't even know what it is, but there will be a day in the future when they will want to live in a democracy. They never had one. They don't even know what it is. They've been dominated by foreigners from time im-

memorial. However, if we pulled out, if we leave Vietnam as it is now, and let the Communists take over, then we have denied these people Democracy because under Communism they'll never have it.

We've been there for quite a number of years. We've done a lot to destroy the country. We fought a lot of battles in a lot of villages, and there are a lot of villages that are no longer on the map. But the fact remains that if we're there, we can rebuild that country. We can help them rebuild, I think, which is most important, and if we pull out then we lose not only our people, our effort, but they lose their democracy or their chance for freedom of democracy in the future.

The Viet Cong during the period of time that I was with them had a two-fold mission with the POWs. Number One was to gain as much propaganda value as possible from the POW while he was a prisoner and secondly to try and actually convert him to their way of thinking and make him turn his back on our form of government, on our economic system. They believe so strongly in what they are doing that they feel they can actually make a POW think the same way.

The thing that they do not take into consideration, however, is the fact that as an American you have a background. You are able to judge for yourself. They can feed you any sort of facts. You can come up with your own conclusions.

They're fed facts; they accept them. And I characterize it by saying there is no need to understand, just memorize, repeat, and believe. This is actually the way they function. They reduce it to the most common denominator, the lowest common denominator. They feed it to their people; they memorize it. If anyone asks the people, they repeat it, and they believe it. This is why they do not have too much effect with Americans because we are able to judge for ourselves, to form our own opinions.

The propaganda which they use was based on the following: Number One, that the Geneva Agreements had been violated in 1954, the country was still divided along what was to be a provisional boundary line, that the government of Ngo Dinh Diem was a puppet government, that the United States is an aggressor in South Vietnam, and the Viet Cong are fighting for national unification and liberation of the fatherland, and "Uncle Ho" for President.

This is the big plan. In other words, they picture us as foreign aggressors trying to set up a new colony in South Vietnam, saying that what we are planning to do is establish a military base in South Vietnam from which we can invade North Vietnam and China. They push hard on this. And the big problem is that very few people have come in contact with Americans and very few people understand Americans.

The other point they push is that the American effort in Vietnam is futile. They say that our effort is crumbling, that we

have nothing which will gain victory, that they can prolong the war to the point that we will have to withdraw. I think they are working primarily on the aspect of public opinion. My cadre made the statement to me, "We do not hope to defeat the United States militarily, but by influencing world public opinion, we can force them to withdraw." They made an evaluation of the situation, and I think they are very well aware of the fact that militarily they cannot defeat us. But, if they can influence public opinion, they can overcome us. They are working on the theory of protracted war of Mao Tse-tung, and this is what they are hoping for.

I feel that some of the points they make about the Americans might be very interesting. They do not know really too much about Americans, and among them I was considered a giant, which was great for my ego. I was in M-1 Company, which I understand no longer exists. Back in ancient history, we had the Corps organized by height, and in the First Regiment—we had two regiments then—A Co, A-1, were the tall people, and M-1 were the short people, and everybody in the company was the same size. Shortly thereafter they brought the flankers into the runt company. We had a runt complex, and everyone over 5'8" was malformed.

While I was with the Viet Cong, most of them would hit me about shoulder height, and they looked upon me as a monster. I thought this was great. And I told them, well, now look, I know some friends of mine who are about two meters high and weigh about 100 kilos, and they were ready to turn in their resignations right there. They had never come in contact with Americans, and what they heard about them from their cadre was—Don't "sweat them," they are big, they are nice targets, they move slowly because they carry too much equipment, and they are really no problem. And, of course, you get all of these wild tales about Viet Cong coming into hand-to-hand combat with Americans.

In fact, they had one article I remember, where they said, "Viet Cong squad defeated a South Korean platoon in hand-to-hand combat, and the South Koreans, using karate, were totally defeated by the Viet Cong. I don't know how much the truth is in the karate, but of course the Viet Cong are using their bare hands, and most of them could not lift the knife they used to clean the fish, I doubted the story somewhat, and knowing the Koreans, I can imagine actually who came out on top in that conflict. The one other point that they brought up again and again was the Americans. They keep saying, well two Viet Cong can "take on" an American battalion.

And one of their favorite stories was about 11 young girls—this was in Hue—and it was a VC girls guerrilla squad that "took on" an American Marine battalion and defeated them. My first question to the cadre, "Was it hand-to-hand combat?" He didn't answer me on that. These were the things that they had heard about

Americans, and they are trying to build the idea that it just takes a couple VC to knock out an American company or an American battalion.

The truth that was happening was that they were finding out for themselves that this condition didn't really exist.

Now, I personally feel that a military victory is possible. In fact it is quite probable, and I say it for this reason. The VC, the Viet Cong, the South Vietnamese are fighting a war in which they were primarily guerrillas. And your guerrilla war develops or guerrilla warfare develops in several phases. We're in a fourth phase now which is a combination guerrilla warfare and regular warfare where regular size units, regiments, divisions, etc. are combined with guerrilla size units in combat.

After the Tet offensive in 1968 the VC lost a large portion of their trained personnel, their old soldiers. Now they're filling with 12, 14, 16-year-olds. No matter how you judge it, these people aren't soldiers yet. The day I got away we had a 12-year-old who was with our guard group. He received his first political lecture the morning of 31 December. Forty-five minutes after that lecture he was dead. Cobras "greased him" when they hit the area.

He wasn't a soldier. He was wearing black, and he was carrying a rifle, but by no stretch of the imagination was he a soldier. And yet this is what they're filling the ranks with.

They're apparently not building for this year or for next year or for anytime in the very near future, they're building for four, five, six years from now. But the point is, can they last? They're depending quite heavily on NVA and on artillery, because the VC really took a "pasting" in the last Tet offensive.

I believe one thing that was quite evident to me, particularly on the 22d of December, the camp I was in was hit by B52s, and this was the first time the guards had come eyeball-to-eyeball with a 750-pound bomb. And at that point morale, discipline, and everything went right to the bottom, and the only thing that they displayed at that time was a great desire to run, which I encouraged. The guards asked me what to do when the bombs started hitting. I told them, "Shut up and run." And I was leading the pack all the way out of the camp. But the guards had been told, now this is the truth, one of the cadre told the guards he'd been within 50 meters of a 750-pound bomb burst, and he hadn't been killed. And the guards believed this up until the 22d of December.

But that morning when the bombs started coming in, the cadre told them to go back and get the equipment, the guards told him "Look buddy, you want it, you go back and get it." And this is the first time the discipline had gone down, but they had come in actual contact with our weaponry.

I think of particular note that morning, the 20th of December is the birthday of

the National Liberation Front, and the 22d of December is the birthday of the Liberation Armed Forces. The Viet Cong celebrated this, and they were celebrating on the 22d. They had all gone down to their local store and picked up "new threads." They had light blue trousers, dark blue tops, sitting around drinking tea and eating little cakes, and they were down at their big mess hall; I call it the forum.

They had all the local officials in, the cadre was down there, and they were sipping tea. The cloud cover was about 10,000 feet, and they never even heard the B52s coming in. There was about a two-second moan, and then the whole world went up, and they came out of that "hooch" posterior over tea kettle. One particular guard named Cookie, this fellow was really a chow hound, and he came out carrying the tea and all the cookies he could get in his pocket. And this is fortunate because that is all we had to eat for the next few days.

We were in an area where they moved three howitzers, three 155s firing harassing and interdiction throughout the area. They had choppers putting in strikes and ARVN had troops on the ground, and this was rather upsetting the Viet Cong. We kept moving around, and they were short of rice, short of food, and everything else. I watched during this particular time the morale of the troops, and it went almost to zero. They were finding out that what they had been told was not true. This is of utmost importance.

I would like to make one more point. While I was there, while I was captured, Captain Humbert Roque Versace, a West Point graduate, was captured with me, and in September 1965 Captain Versace was executed by the Viet Cong. The reason that he was executed was because he set an example as an American Officer that the Viet Cong could not tolerate having known to the world. Captain Versace, when he came there, being a West Point graduate and being a man to whom, I know, Duty, Honor, and Country meant more than words. Rocky lived this code. He came into contact with the Viet Cong, and he shot them down right on their own ground. They couldn't break him; they couldn't even bend him. As a result they executed him.

He set an example for me in particular, and the other POWs in the camp and to put it in the vernacular, he was a tough act to follow. He died because of his actions; he died because of the stand that he took.

I'll give you a couple of examples of this. When we went to our first political school, this was shortly after we were captured, none of us knew exactly what was going on. Rocky had been hit three times in the left leg, around the knee. He was in pretty bad shape, dependent upon the Viet Cong for any medical care which he was going to get. He was isolated in the night; in the daytime he was kept in leg irons and arm irons, unable to move, kept flat on his back.

They built a "hooch" for him which was a bit off the ground, palm thatching all the way around it, and on the roof so that it was hot; it was dark. He was kept in there all the time. The only time he went out was to go to the latrine and when they brought him food. He tried to escape with a wound in the leg, was recaptured, and actually he was in worse shape in their eyes than anybody else. Rocky spoke French, and he spoke Vietnamese, and as a result they could reach him in English, Vietnamese, and French, so he had the cadre, the guards, the interrogators, the indoctrinators, everybody, all over him. But he stood toe-to-toe with them and told them they were wrong.

He went down to a political school. I was in a cage which was near the school, and I heard Rocky when he got in there. They had two provincial level cadre come down to give us the instruction, and I remember Rocky saying "You can make me come to this class, but I am an officer in the United States Army. You can make me listen, you can force me to sit here, but I don't believe a word of what you are saying."

The second example was a guard who spoke no English, he was Vietnamese, and he was in a camp. Rocky was put in solitary, and this guard was one of the ones who was in the camp trying to indoctrinate Rocky, and I saw the guard later on when he came over to my camp after Rocky was executed and based on his sessions with Rocky when he tried to convince Rocky that they were right, he knew two English words—bull---. But these were the only two words that that guard knew, and this was Rocky's answer to everything that guard told him.

This was a West Point graduate! I think the thing here is Rocky set an example. He died for what he believed in. He died for his actions, but he is a man who I believe will be remembered, and I am going to see that he is remembered.

If anybody is in a situation similar, here is a man you can look to. Perhaps not the way he went or what happened to him, but this was Rocky's choice. He could have bent, he could have broken, he could have lived. But he chose not to, and this was primarily because he was a West Pointer. And this is of importance to all of us because we are all in the same boat. And in a very few years, you are going to be coming into contact with this conflict, and there may be those among you who will be coming into the same kind of contact that Rocky did, so remember him. I am going to see that people do because for me he was the greatest example of what an officer should be that I have ever come in contact with.

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West Point Glee Club

Continued from page 21

The desirable aspects of TV appearances by the Glee Club, especially from the USMA public relations point of view remain unquestionable. The Club generates

its greatest impact, however, during its in-person performances. A typical concert program runs about two hours and features, in addition to the full chorus, performances by the Headliners, a folk music group, and a piano solo by the Club's accompanist from the USMA Band. Program selections are drawn from popular military ballads, show tunes, folk music, and traditional West Point songs.

Regarding personal appearances, they have historically been concentrated primarily in the New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and New England area. In the past ten years the Club has focused on the northeast corner of the country where West Point's presence solves many of the Academy's publicity problems. In the West and Midwest sections, where West Point does not have a geographic advantage, the Club has made only nine concert tours in 35 years.

Due to the extensive demands of academic study, the Glee Club receives more invitations than it can possibly fulfill. The Club, however, is interested in selectively expanding its contributions to USMA by conducting concert programs in the West and Midwest during next year's Spring Leave period, tentatively scheduled for 19-23 March 1970. As the Glee Club is an extracurricular activity, all expenses connected with an appearance must be borne by the concert hosts, and the ability to bear the expense plays a major part in the selection of the appearances. Two principal devices serve to lighten the burden of hosts' expenses. First, the Club members are frequently billeted in private homes. And sponsors are permitted to charge admission to concerts provided that revenues acquired from such charges do not exceed expenses. In the past sponsors have included civic and business groups, local AUSA Chapters, West Point Societies or a combination of organizations.

A Spring Leave tour of the West and Midwest could provide a valuable contribution to the Academy's admissions effort. March is the time of year when many high school juniors find themselves on the brink of a decision regarding college plans. A widely publicized, well attended, and well reported performance by the Glee Club at just this time could not help but have a swaying effect on many of these juniors. Members of the Club also could be made available for personal appearances at schools and local TV stations in the area during the afternoons of the concert dates.

In 1939, Lieutenant Colonel William H. Schempf, the Glee Club Director, received his Bachelor of Music Degree with honors from the University of Wisconsin. Enlisting in the Army in 1942, he was commissioned and spent two years in England with the Eighth Air Force and was awarded the Air Medal with two oak leaf clusters. After World War II he attended the University of Vienna, Austria, and the Eastman School of Music at the University of Rochester where he received his

Doctoral Degree. Since 1958, Colonel Schempf has lent his professional talents to the Glee Club.

From the days when errant cadets slipped past the OC to visit Benny Haven's legendary tavern and gather 'round in song, there has been more than a century of choral progress squeezed into a short span of years. Today's Glee Club is an outstanding singing group that willingly turns its vocal abilities toward attracting the quality candidates the Academy seeks, always carrying forward its motto: "No Fun Without Music, and No Music Without Fun."

Note: Organizations desiring to schedule appearances by the Cadet Glee Club should write to the Officer-in-Charge, Cadet Glee Club, West Point, N.Y. 10996.

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Evaluation of Leadership

Continued from page 23

lieutenants in the Army.

For the most part, the pre-entrance examinations which cadets take prior to coming to the Academy are designed to test their scholastic and physical aptitudes. That is, these tests predict quite accurately their ability to complete successfully the Academy's academic and physical education courses of instruction. While each cadet varies in these aptitudes, steady improvement of selection techniques has resulted in an impressive reduction in the academic attrition rate to only three or four per cent.

Cadets also vary in the degree of leadership aptitude they possess. While there is some effort made to screen candidates on manifestations of leadership during their formative years, the same sophistication in leadership selection techniques as in the academic areas has not been achieved. Nonetheless, it is believed that the vast majority of entering cadets possess adequate leadership aptitude, and whether they become good leaders or not usually depends upon their response to the numerous programs designed to develop their leadership capabilities.

Related to this foregoing remark is the age-old question of whether leaders are born or whether they can be developed through the provision of the proper environment and training. Research conducted at the Academy and elsewhere shows quite clearly that while inherited traits or characteristics play a role in determining a person's leadership potential, the much more important factors are the environment and training which the individual experiences during his lifetime. Entering cadets vary in their leadership aptitude, then, primarily because of their divergent environments prior to entrance. Psychologists also tell us that an individual's personality is reasonably well set by his 17th or 18th birthday with little change occurring thereafter. Personality, of course, is important to leadership ability, and while the West Point environment and training

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Associated Press

Maj. James N. Rowe, 31, of McAllen, Tex., from five years as a prisoner of the Vietcong. Rowe got away New Year's Eve.

Vietcong Free 3 Americans At Ceremony in Open Field

PRISONERS, From A1

crusts of blood were visible between his toes.

"We came a long way, very far, through swamps and marshes and woodlands. Sometimes we traveled by boat at night," he said.

Waiting Crowd

Waiting for them in the large clearing were about 70 people. Standing in the center were the two top American negotiators, Lt. Col. John V. Gibney of Clearwater, Fla., and Maj. Jean A. Sauvageot of Akron, Ohio, who speaks fluent Vietnamese.

Facing the Americans was a Vietcong field commander, in a floppy hat and, dirt-brown shirt, and his interpreter.

About 20 newsmen and photographers with cameras aimed around the prisoners.

The three Americans halt-

ed when they saw the crowds, and their guards tugged at their sleeves.

Humane Treatment

Only Brigham reacted to questions from newsmen, saying: "I would like to say that the National Liberation Front does treat its prisoners humanely."

Later, Brigham put his arm around the shoulder of Capt. Melvin R. Chatman, a U.S. team member, and told him:

"I want you to know that I made a few statements over there to the press, but I made them under pressure because I was still a prisoner."

Chatman then ordered Brigham and the other two not to talk to anybody.

During the first 30 minutes of the meeting the Vietcong attempted to follow a "procedure" again. The tactic had resulted in the failure

of the Christmas Day meeting.

Vietcong soldiers brought out five wooden stools, and the Americans responded by producing five metal chairs, but the U.S. representatives did not sit down and the Vietcong didn't force the issue.

Recess Called

Team leader Gibney said: "I am willing to take the prisoners now, and right here." The Vietcong said the three prisoners would be produced in one hour. They then called a recess.

In fluent English, the Vietcong interpreter quoted his superiors' three major conditions for the release of the prisoners: return the men promptly to their families; the men must not be punished; and the South Vietnamese in the area around the prisoners must not be armed against the Vietcong.